

# EUROPEAN JEWELLED ARTS





*Daniel Mignot, French (active 1590-1616). Pendant Design. Engraving. Published in Augsburg 1616. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund.*

## GOLD, GEMS AND THE CRAFTSMAN

Jewelry is still very much part of our lives and in these times of mobile taste, imagination in personal ornament is appreciated more than it was a few decades ago. It is therefore appropriate to devote an issue of the *Museum News* to the great age of jewelry, the Renaissance, an age which certainly equaled our own in imagination and variety and probably exceeded it in the manual skills of creating splendid works of art in miniature. As you read these pages, imagine yourself wearing or handling as your own the precious objects illustrated. Only then will you sense the quality of the creative spirits which produced them.

Our thanks to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for permission to reproduce works of art in their collections; also to Dr. Yvonne Hackenbroch of the Metropolitan Museum for sharing her extensive knowledge of this complex field with us.

Unless otherwise noted, all Toledo Museum objects were acquired with funds left by Florence Scott Libbey. All paintings illustrated were acquired with funds provided by Edward Drummond Libbey, or were his gift.

*Otto Wittmann, Director*

*Cover (front and back). Pendant with Venus and Cupid. German (Augsburg or Munich), about 1600. Gold, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, pearls and enamel. Height 2 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Prince Radziwill, Nieswiez, Poland; Desmoni, New York. 60.22. Made in the style of Daniel Mignot, a French Huguenot goldsmith who worked in Augsburg and published some 100 plates of jewelry designs. His style represents a transition from the framed figural style of the 16th century to the massed grouping of stones characteristic of the 17th century.*



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*Master of the Vision of St. John, German (active about 1450-1470). The Adoration of the Kings (detail). The kings wear elaborately jeweled court robes while Joseph, as befits a carpenter, is in undecorated garments.*



Since prehistoric times, people have had a liking for personal adornment and precious objects. The motives underlying this desire cover a range of attitudes running from sheer ostentation to admiration. The two most basic functions of jewelry are to enhance one's appearance and to provide a small-scale delight for one's eyes, but these simple pleasures have been loaded with other significances—display of wealth, assertion of social status, belief in the magical properties of rare or exotic substances, demonstration of sophistication and display of religious faith. Consequently, the jeweler's art can be appreciated both on a visual basis and as a chapter in social history.

During the Renaissance, a number of factors combined to create a boom in the production of precious objects. The first was a great increase in prosperity; more people who wanted jewelry could afford it. In Gothic France, legislation of 1283 tried to restrain members of the *bourgeoisie* or upper middle class from wearing jewelry, but by 1497 German rulers were passing laws forbidding peasants and tradesmen from wearing gold and pearls. With a broadened base of middle class custom and the revival of classical studies, the variety of jewelry types expanded from court

regalia and devotional items to include personal emblems and subjects from ancient mythology or classical allegories.

Besides increasing wealth, the expansion of commerce in the 16th century introduced unprecedented supplies of precious stones and metals. The opening of trade routes to the Orient greatly increased the quantities of pearls available, while the Spanish conquests of Mexico and Peru under Cortes and Pizarro brought a flood of gold, emeralds and other rare stones to Europe.

A major factor in growth of interest in jewelry was the role the Renaissance aristocrat had to play as a patron of the arts; one could no longer be merely noble or rich: one had somehow to maintain the loftiness of title or compensate for grossness of wealth by demonstrations of learning and cultivation. In a rapidly secularizing society, pious works or attitudes and gentle birth no longer alone sufficed for social precedence. Exquisitely wrought jewelry designed with appropriate humanist allegories provided an ideally portable means of displaying one's solvency, education and esthetic involvement all at once, a





*Ambrosius Benson, Flemish (1500-1550). Portrait of a Lady. The sober, but rich, dress of this noblewoman of about 1525 sets off the pendant she wears. Wearing gold chains was more a northern than an Italian fashion.*



*Hans Holbein the Younger, German-English (1497-1543). Portrait of a Lady of the Cromwell Family (detail). The splendid pendant shows Lot and his family fleeing Sodom and may have topical reference to the retirement of the Cromwells from the Court of Henry VIII with whom they were out of favor. A Holbein design for this jewel survives in the British Museum.*

much simpler solution than commissioning bulky paintings and sculpture which were less often seen by one's peers.

The despotic princes of Italy, the Imperial nobility of Germany and the royal houses of France, England and Spain set the standards of taste in jewelry as well as in the other arts. As patrons of the goldsmith, they were fortunate in being able to command the talents of major artists. In the city state of Florence the great architect Lorenzo Ghiberti and the painter Sandro Botticelli both started as goldsmiths. Albrecht Dürer was the pupil of his father who was a goldsmith. François I enjoyed the skill of Benvenuto Cellini, not only as a sculptor but as a jeweler and it is Cellini's name that first comes to mind as a Renaissance artist more famous for his small precious works than his heroic bronzes. The court of Henry VIII commanded the services of Hans Holbein the Younger, the finest portrait painter of his age and the designer of superb jewelry.

An Italian goldsmith working for French royalty and a German artist designing ornaments for the Tudors suggest the probability that there was something of an international style in Renaissance jewelry. For a number of reasons this was the case, which gives rise to considerable problems in dating and attributing individual pieces. In addition to the migration of goldsmiths and designers from one country to another, engraved designs were published and distributed broadly after the invention of the printing press. Germany and Holland were major centers for this activity. Several jewels in the Museum collection were created from printed pattern books. Another factor in this complexity was the migration of the jewels themselves as gifts between royal houses, parts of princely dowries or booty of conquest. A final complication was change of taste. Particularly fine, large or famous stones were often remounted in new settings and examples of fine craftsmanship were incorporated into later ensembles. Renaissance and Baroque portraits depict many beautiful examples of the goldsmiths' art which have vanished entirely. As fashions changed rapidly with the publication of new designs, outmoded pieces were melted down to provide material for new work. The study of portraiture has therefore become an essential part of the history of European jewelry.

The increasing skill of gem cutters also played a part in a broad change of style. Toward the end of the 16th century simple "table," pyramid and



rounded cutting gave way to "rose" cutting, an early type of facet cutting which originated in Holland. By 1640 the number of facets had risen to 16, a great advance over pyramid cutting although less than half the number of a modern brilliant cut. The early Renaissance practice of isolating stones on a field of gold often enhanced with enamel gave way in the late 16th century to grouped clusters of flashing gems with the gold serving more as a trellis than a background.

As befitted precious materials, many skills were involved in the making of Renaissance and Baroque jewelry. Not only did the jeweler have to cut and polish his stones, but he needed to be expert in casting and engraving as well. As part of the Renaissance interest in antiquity, ancient cameos were incorporated into new settings, but when these were lacking, the jeweler had to carve his own. The Imperial Roman idea of the medal also was revived and some Renaissance medals were minted or "struck" like coins rather than being cast. To set off scrollwork or heighten the effect of figures, the goldsmith had to know how to use enamels, a technique used extensively in France and Germany. Painted enameling, for which Limoges was famous, was also employed on the backs of pendants. The ultimate technical refinement in enameling was a rare type called "émail en résille sur verre" (enamel in network on glass) which required engraving a design on the surface of a piece of convex glass, filling the hollows with translucent enamels and backing the whole with gold foil.

Jewelry was (and still is) intimately connected with the art of costume and, as dress styles changed, so did personal ornaments. In the early years of the 16th century, jewels were regarded as items of individual beauty and often worn singly, but the 1540's saw the rise of the "Spanish Mode" of dress as exemplified by the Museum's portraits of Elizabeth of Valois and Elizabeth I of England. Jewels gradually lost their character as individual masterpieces isolated as accents on clothing and became part of a massed panoply enlivening a stiff façade of silk and velvet. Not content with necklaces, brooches and headpieces, the late Renaissance lady would even have pearls sewn onto the fabric itself so that one's eye could not possibly escape an impression of overpowering richness. The accomplishment of such an effect sometimes taxed the means even of royalty and Queen Elizabeth was not above buying false pearls by the hundreds for her wardrobe.

This anti-classical trend was gradually supplanted by the freer forms of the Baroque, and



*François Clouet, French (1516?-1572). Elizabeth of Valois. In this portrait of 1558-9, as in that of the English Elizabeth, the massing of jewels in the "Spanish mode" is apparent, as are pearls sewn onto the cloth. Table cut stones are prominent in the pendant cross.*



*Anonymous British Artist (after 1588). Elizabeth I. The unmounted pearls in the Queen's hair and the six strands of pearls which she rather pointedly fondles were the wedding gift in 1532 of Pope Clement VII to Marie de Medici from whom they passed to Mary Queen of Scots. Elizabeth acquired them at little cost after having her beheaded.*



Hans Muelich, German (1516-1573). *Portrait of a Lady* (detail). Muelich, painter and jewelry designer to the Bavarian Court, shows this sober lady of 1540 wearing four rings.



by the middle of the 17th century the single jewel was again providing accents on looser, draped garments which revealed more of the figure. But jewels were now quite different from those of a century earlier. No longer was the artist-goldsmith supreme in the field. The increased supply and improved cutting of diamonds, together with their stellar effect when clustered on heavy folds of dark velvet were rapidly reducing the role of the goldsmith to that of a stone mounter, while the dealer in stones began to dominate the field. In Cellini's time a ruby was worth eight times more than a diamond of similar quality, because table cutting showed the colored gem off to better advantage, but 150 years later fashion gave a pre-eminence to the colorless stone which it has never since lost.

Fashion, however, was not the sole cause of change. Superstition also played its part. From ancient times up through the Renaissance, precious stones had been assigned curative or protective powers in confusing and often conflicting abundance. Lorenzo de Medici was fed powdered diamonds and pearls by his doctor in a vain effort to stave off his death in 1492. Rubies were presumed to bring peace, happiness and untroubled sleep to the owner, while diamonds were a great help in battle and emeralds brought success in financial ventures. Jasper was effective against nose bleeds and assured a faithful wife. Pliny's *Natural History* had discussed the magical properties of gems and, as part of the interest in classical science, more than fifteen editions of this work were published in Italy in the late 15th century, doubtless helping to expand the superstition. But the great scientific discoveries of the 17th century tended to reduce classical authors



*Mattia Preti, Italian (1613-1699). The Feast of Herod (detail). Salome is shown as a Neapolitan lady of the late 1650's. Her dress and jewelry emphasize her figure in contrast to the earlier fashion which masked the body in stiff forms studded with jewels. The stones in her brooch and necklace dominate their mounting.*

to the more reasonable level of sources of literary allegory, rather than authorities whose data should pass unchallenged, and the crystalline structure of stones was studied in order to obtain the maximum brilliance and dazzling radiance in cutting.

The wearing of rings, like that of body jewelry, changed with fashions. In the 15th century one or two sufficed, but by 1525 four on one hand, although unusual, were not rare. Both men and women wore rings in profusion. While necessarily the smallest type of jewelry, Renaissance craftsmen wrought rings of exquisite detail and boldness of design.

The Renaissance goldsmith applied his skills to other items than jewelry, such as pomanders and vinaigrettes. However, he brought to them an equivalent sense of preciousness. Indeed, some small vessels served as pendants or as terminals on belts or waist chains. The artist's challenge in creating jeweled vessels was to enhance the properties of semiprecious stones or delicately blown Venetian glass. After the great age of the goldsmith-jeweler passed, a demand for fine personal containers continued. One might almost call the 18th century the age of the snuff box considering the numbers that have survived and in these and similar vessels the goldsmith could still produce work of great quality but diminutive size. Although the stone merchant had taken over personal ornament, the wealthy and aristocratic nonetheless still required the services of skilled artists to provide the equipment of a complex social ritual.

*Rudolf M. Riefstahl*





*Rosary. German or Italian, dated 1550. Gold, coral and brilliants. Length 7¼ inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.112. The Latin inscription, "Life is a brief dream" and the knop in the form of a skull repeat a common Renaissance theme on the vanity of life. The self-devouring snake provides a nice contrast as a symbol of eternity and is large enough to serve as a finger ring, a feature found in some rosaries.*



*Cameo Pendant. Roman, 1st century A.D., and French, mid 16th century. Agate, gold, enamel and pearl. Height 3 inches. Ex-coll: Spitzer, Paris; Desmoni, New York. 60.20. The use of an ancient cameo in this delicately enameled pendant gave the wearer status as a person of classical taste.*







*Mars Cameo Pendant. Italian, 16th century. Agate, gold, pearls, jewels and enamel. Height 3 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.115. The florid carving in high Renaissance style of this cameo contrasts strongly with the simpler manner of the female portrait cameo preceding.*



*Ring. Italian, 16th century. Gold and jewels. Maximum size 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.120. The imaginative scrollwork on this ring shows the fine quality of work which the Renaissance goldsmith was capable of, even on a very small scale.*

*Double Ring. Italian, 16th century. Gold, jewels and enamel. Maximum size 1 $\frac{1}{6}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.122. The cavities in the two parts contain a minute infant and a skeleton. Reinforcing the theme of the fleetingness of life is a Latin inscription, "Whatever you may do, do prudently and be mindful of the end."*



*Footed Flask. Italian, 16th century.  
Agate, gold, brilliant and enamel.  
Height without chain 2 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches.  
Ex-coll: Gutmann, Berlin; Knight, The  
Hague. 59.113.*



*Oval Bowl. Italian, 16th century. Lapis lazuli, gold,  
jewels and enamel. Length 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll:  
Knight, The Hague. 59.118. This and the following  
item show the Renaissance fondness for lavishing great  
skill on costly materials to enhance the splendor of  
richly-veined semi-precious stones.*

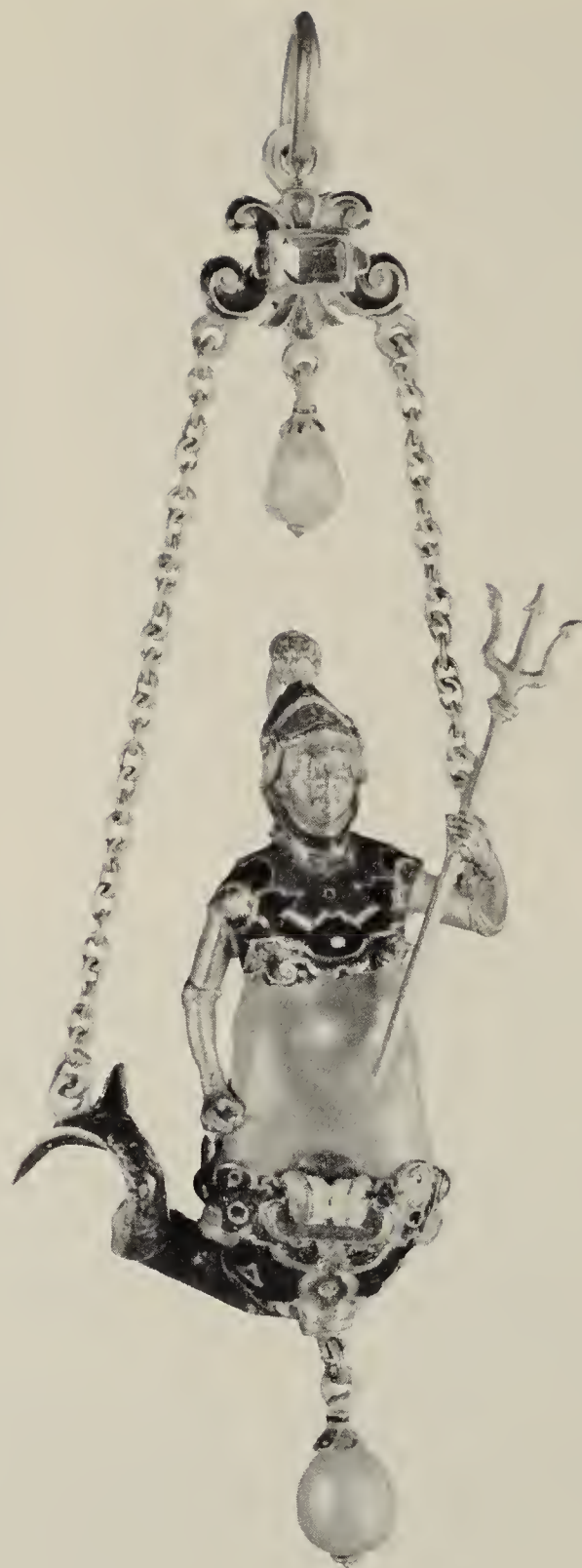




*Pendant Cameo of Christ and the Virgin. Italian, 16th century. Green jasper (bloodstone), gold and enamel. Height 1¾ inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.116. The use of bloodstone was apparently considered appropriate to the depiction of Christ wearing the crown of thorns. Several similar portrayals in bloodstone have survived.*



*Pendant Mirror. French, late 16th century; signed I. L. lower left. Silver-gilt, enamel and mirror. Height 4⅜ inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.108. The initials stand for Jean Limousin I (about 1560-1610), a famous worker in painted enamels from Limoges. The appropriately classical subject, adapted from a print by Étienne Delaune (1519-1583), shows the heroine Britomartis taking to the sea to escape the attentions of King Minos of Crete.*



Neptune Pendant. Italian or German, late 16th century. Baroque pearls, gold, brilliants and enamel. Height overall  $4\frac{1}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Gutmann, Berlin; Knight, The Hague. 59.111. Goldsmiths were so fond of employing odd shaped pearls to create fantastic figures that the term "Baroque" has come to describe any pearl that is not regular in contour. A small gold plug in the back of the pendant suggests a possible use as a perfume flask.





*Necklace Elements. German (Augsburg), late 16th century. Pearls, diamonds, gold and enamel. Largest link 2 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches across. Ex-coll: Manheim; Morgan; Desmoni, New York. 60.19. Tradition associates these elements with a gift from the noted Fugger banking family of Augsburg to the Emperor Ferdinand II of Bohemia and Hungary.*



*Neptune Pendant. Spanish or Dutch, about 1600. Garnets, emeralds, gold and enamel. Height 4¼ inches. Ex-coll: Desmoni, New York. 60.21. The flatness of design and bold use of jewels suggest a Spanish source while the robust modeling of the figure indicate a possible northern origin.*





*Pomander. Dutch, early 17th century. Silver, partly gilt. Height 1 $\frac{1}{16}$  inches. Ex-coll: Desmoni, New York. 60.18. Pomanders, often hung from the waist on chains, were filled with powdered spices and perfumed sponges to combat the odors prevalent in a society in which bathing was rare. The sliding covers of the compartments of this example are numbered to identify the contents. The engraved Allegories of the Senses on the exterior are based on designs by Martin de Vos.*



*Martin de Vos, Netherlands (1532-1603). Engraved by Adriaen Collaert (1560-1618). The Sense of Smell. Engraving from a series of the Five Senses. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whittelsey Fund.*





*Pendant Medallion. Italian, dated 1611. Brilliant, gold and enamel. Height 2¼ inches. Ex-coll: Gutmann, Berlin; Knight, The Hague. 59.117. This medallion was struck as a coin and then enameled. It celebrates the marriage of Matthias II of Hungary (later Emperor) and Anna of Tyrol.*







Pendant with Allegory of Charity. French, early 17th century. Gold, enamel and glass. Height  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Thewalt, Cologne; Gutmann, Berlin; Knight, The Hague. 59.109. The front shows the female figure of Charity with three children under a convex oval glass which ties in with the decoration of the back in "émail en résille sur verre," a rare French and South German technique of the early 17th century of enameling on glass. The design of the back is reminiscent of engraved prints by Virgil Solis.





Rock Crystal Plaques. Holland,  
about 1630 (gold mounts later).  
Diameters  $4\frac{5}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll:  
Knight, The Hague. 59.100, 101.  
These portraits of Frederik  
Hendrik, Prince of Orange, and  
his wife Amalia von Solms are  
carved in relief after full length  
portraits by Adriaen van de  
Venne which were engraved by  
Willem Outgersz. Akersloot in  
1628. Note the aigrette and  
pendant cross the Princess is  
wearing.







Vase mounted as Ewer. Latticino glass. Venetian, about 1600. Jeweled, silver-gilt and enameled mounts by Heinrich Straub of Nuremberg (active 1608-35). Height 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Ex-coll: Goldschmidt-Rothschild, Frankfurt. 60.36. Venetian glass with its lace-like geometric patterns was a favorite of northern goldsmiths for elaborating with fantastic handles.



Mounted Pilgrim Flask. Agate Glass. Venetian, about 1600. Silver-gilt and enameled mounts, French, early 17th century. Height 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. 47.56.



*Pomander. French or Italian, late 17th century. Jewels, gold and enamel. Height 1 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.107. Inside the neck is a small, delicately pierced flap to permit the passage of scent.*



*Vinaigrette. Probably English, about 1760. Banded agate and gold. Height 2 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.105. In the foot is a seal showing a prancing horse and a French motto, "Without equal." The elaborate rococo mounts recall the mature style of Paul de Lamerie, the English Huguenot silversmith.*





Snuffbox. Probably French, mid 18th century. Amethyst, quartz and gold. Length  $3\frac{5}{16}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.104. This severely rococo box has flowers cut in intaglio on the sides and two intaglio portraits inside the lid.



Mourning Ring. English, 1785. Amethyst, brilliants, gold, and enamel. Maximum size  $1\frac{5}{16}$  inch. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. Gift of S. Nystad, The Hague, 59.106. Inscribed with the death dates of Ann Copner, aged 2, and James Copner, aged 37. This simple "Adam" style ring was probably worn by Copner's widow.



*Bonbon Box. French, 1787. Rock crystal with three-color gold mounts. Diameter  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.103.*



*Snuffbox. French, about 1785. Rock crystal with jeweled three-color gold mounts. Length  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches. Ex-coll: Knight, The Hague. 59.102. This and the preceding box exemplify the severe lines of goldsmith's work on the eve of the French Revolution. A rich effect is nonetheless achieved in the meticulous working of costly materials.*





